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# THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

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In the Educational Times for September 1 appears a translation of Vives's tractate on the Education of Boys, an interesting treatise of the period of Henry VIII, dated 1523. The education referred to is an education in literature; by this is meant an education in Latin and Greek literature. It is a short work but interesting enough to be reprinted as a whole, because it shows very clearly the reason for the cultured character of English public men. Certainly the end of this kind of education was to fill the mind with a store of rich materials which might never be exhausted and the system of routine enjoined was adapted entirely to that end.

I should like to quote what he says about the development of the memory and his wise remarks on the necessity of keeping a commonplace book, a necessity which my own experience has taught me the value of because I never did it. Reading a great work with pencil and note-book is apt in most cases to bring more lasting results than reading it without<sup>1</sup>. "Never read any book", he says, "without selecting passages . . . never read anything with a loitering mind, or a mind intent on other things; let it be intently fixed on the reading". Directions as to taking notes, asking questions, developing a style in Latin are combined with suggestions as to what authors are most to be studied; in these he goes lightly over the whole range of Latin literature, not omitting a number of late and mediaeval authors. Inasmuch as, however, the student is expected to acquire a fluent knowledge of Latin, his directions for Latin conversation are interesting in view of the suggestions heard from many quarters that Latin should be used more in the class-room than has been the case hitherto.

Speak yourself as you hear the instructed speak, or as you read in Latin writers. Shun the words which you consider of doubtful value both in speech and writing, unless first you have got to know from your teacher that they are Latin. With those who speak Latin imperfectly, whose conversation may corrupt your own, rather speak English or any other language in which there is not the same danger. Converse gladly with those who are wise and fluent. No pleasure is greater than to hear those who, in their speech, have instantaneous balm (*praesentanea medicamenta*) for all the ailments of the mind.

. . . I give you my opinion on those authors

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Paulsen, 'The German Universities and University Study, translated by Thilly, 317-319.

who are to be esteemed especially from the point of view of increasing the richness of vocabulary, and for increasing knowledge of subject-matter. For daily conversation Terence is of great importance. Cicero made considerable use of him. Indeed, on account of the charm and gaiety of speech in his plays, many thought they were written by nobles of the highest families. Also the letters of Cicero, especially those to Atticus, teach much and may render ready practice for purposes of conversation. For in them the conversation is pure and simple, such as Cicero himself used with his wife, his children, his servants, his friends, at dinner, in the bath, on his couch, in the garden. There are, too, the familiar Colloquies written by Erasmus, which are as pleasant as they are useful. These are of no small importance, since Erasmus is a man of cultivated and refined intellect. The letters of the younger Pliny may supply many ideas (*sententiae*) of any kind of letter, which the writer of letters may need. They seem as if they had been composed almost so as to describe a few events, very much like Cicero. On the other hand, they differ from his treatment in the times concerned. The opinions expressed are often charming and afford material for enriching the expression in letter-writing.

Terence, the author that he especially recommends as a conversational model, is so easy that he is read in many classes in the Freshman year and could without much trouble be read in the High School if there were any good reason for it. It has often occurred to me to wonder why in classes studying Terence the effort is not more often made to reproduce in some degree the ancient atmosphere by either translation at dictation or reading aloud or reciting. The character of the style is such that Terence affords better material for translation at dictation than most narrative writers, the sentences being short as a rule and the periods not involved. In the customary translation at dictation the length of the sentences makes progress slow and involves continual repetition. This tends to obscure the progress of the story. Inexperienced students lose the beginning of the sentences before they reach the end, and the end when they attempt to retain the beginning, and this happens in despite of the most careful phrasing on the part of the teacher. Nor is it to be wondered at because most people would be hard put to it to repeat an English sentence of three or four lines after it had been read to them once. If, therefore, translation at dictation is good—and in my opinion it is very good—I know of no author better adapted to it than Terence; and if our secondary teachers

were not so rigidly bound by the strait-jacket of college entrance requirements I should like to see certain parts of Terence appear in the High School curriculum, used, however, for the purpose of translation at dictation.

G. L.

### Latin Literature in Secondary Schools

Every teacher of Latin, whether in secondary school or in college, has felt the difficulty of crowding into the hour or the forty minutes allowed all the explanation and drill required to bring out the content of the day's lesson, and still more the impossibility of giving the average student any adequate idea of the language in a three- or even in a four-year course. The first-year student too often feels the learning of paradigms mere drudgery, and is not aroused to any high degree of enthusiasm at having to translate into Latin such inspiring sentiments as 'We shall present rewards to our soldiers', 'I had already given you the letter', 'Let us spare these children', 'I could easily have persuaded your brother', etc.

When he comes to read a classic author it is somewhat better, but not infrequently the end of his course finds him possessed of a vague impression that Latin is a language, now very dead, which once was used by three Romans—who ought to have known better—for the purpose of making High School textbooks. To him the Latin literature means two to four books of Caesar, four or five orations of Cicero and two to six books of Vergil—which is much the same as if one should say that English literature consists of a part of Grant's memoirs, an oration or two of Edmund Burke and a few books of *Paradise Lost*. Or, if he has approached Caesar through a course of 'easy Latin', he is faintly aware that there once was an author named Cornelius Nepos who had as many lives as a cat, all very dry and made merely to be read in school at the rate of twenty lines or so a day. Possibly he has had a taste of *Viri Romae*, but who wrote this fascinating compilation, and whether it was done before or after Caesar's time he does not care particularly to know. He may have heard mention of Ovid as another school exercise, but the clarity of his ideas on the whole subject is well illustrated by the recent inquiry of an entering freshman who wanted to know 'Who wrote Ovid?'

The secondary school has to keep in view at all times the needs of two classes of pupils—those who are preparing for college and the larger class for whom the high school commencement brings the end of formal culture study. These latter at least ought to be given a wider outlook. They ought to know that Vergil was not the only poet of ancient Rome, that there were other and greater historians than Caesar, and that the Catiline orations do not exhaust the range of Roman eloquence. They

should learn that the great periods of English literature have their counterparts in that of old Rome, and the essential features of each period should be as familiar to them as those of English literature. They should know what historical events led to the introduction of Greek ideas and forms, and what influences affected their development in Roman soil. They should not be left in ignorance of the part played in this development by the drama, nor of the two forms of literature which were truly Roman and comparatively independent of Greek models. In a word, the high school graduate should have some intelligent idea of the beginnings, content, forms and great names of the Roman literature.

This has a rather formidable sound, and it is easy to imagine some overburdened teacher as exclaiming, 'Is the man crazy? Does he expect us to cram in a course of Latin literature on top of the translation, composition and scansion we can't find time for now?' I'll try to explain how it can be done. Of course the first-year pupil cannot be expected to feel a lively interest in the literature at large, and even when reading Caesar his attention is so much engrossed with ablatives absolute and indirect discourse as to leave little time for anything else. By the time Cicero is reached the pupil ought to be able to see a little way beyond the daily drudgery of etymology and syntax, but during most of the year Cicero's own style will demand almost exclusive attention. In the fourth year of Latin study, however, when teacher and student are so fortunate as to enjoy a fourth year, we certainly may expect the latter to look about him and inquire what it is that has made these old books worth preserving.

At first, of course, the student finds his hands full in solving the mysteries of the poetic style. His reading of the verse itself, according to the methods used, will be a task and bugbear or a pleasant aid in appreciating the music of the poet's song. However this may be it is well to postpone anything resembling *formal* study of the literature till the student can translate Vergil with comparative ease and precision and scansion has lost its first terrors. Meantime the teacher can let fall an occasional hint by way of preparing the ground. In reading the *Aeneid* there often will rise occasion to refer to the pioneer Ennius, to whose *Annales* the later poet was so greatly indebted. The meeting of myths in Vergil will remind the teacher of the great Latin treasurehouse of mythology, and it may often prove profitable to read or have read to the class such a tale as that of Scylla or Daedalus or Orpheus, as told in Ovid's smooth and easy style. The very mention of Vergil, moreover, will remind one of his contemporary and friend, the lyric poet Horace, and this will naturally suggest some mention of the little group of which Maecenas was the patron. Something can be told in brief of the field occupied by each, and so,